

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:409

ANSWERED ON:22.02.2006

GRANTING OVERSEAS CITIZEN OF INDIA STATUS

Chaudhary Shri Pankaj

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the Union Government has decided to grant Overseas Citizen of India status to Indians turned `naturalized American Citizen` with right to function from either country ;
- (b) If so, the salient features thereof;
- (c) Whether this status with voting rights would be extended to Indian Citizens of the Gulf region;
- (d) If so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore;
- (e) Whether the Government has surveyed the demand and utility of these citizens seeking the said status; and
- (f) If so, the time by which the said status is likely to be granted?

Answer

MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (VAYALAR RAVI)

(a)& (b)Yes. Persons of Indian Origin of all countries, except Pakistan and Bangladesh who fulfill certain conditions, are eligible to apply and become Overseas Citizens of India (OCI). OCIs are entitled to multiple-entry, multi- purpose, life-long visas with no requirement of registration with police. Hence they can live and work in India or in the country of their naturalization. OCIs are not entitled to hold constitutional posts and employment in the Government. They are however eligible to work in the private sector. OCIs enjoy parity with NRIs in respect of economic, financial and educational fields except in relation to acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties.

(c)&(d) A proposal to grant voting rights to Indian citizens who are not ordinarily resident in India on account of employment, education or otherwise has been approved by the Government. The facility will meet a long-standing demand of Indian workers in the Gulf who take up employment there on a contract basis and cannot be naturalized in the countries they work. The facility will be granted after Parliament approves the necessary amendments to the Representation of the People Act. A Bill in this regard is expected to be introduced in the current session of Parliament.

(e)&(f)Both OCI and grant of voting rights are part of Government's efforts to promote a broader and stronger engagement with the Indian diaspora.